United Nations S/PV.8026

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8026th meeting
Thursday, 17 August 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aboulatta	(Egypt)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni
	Ukraine	Mr. Paulichenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2293 (2016) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/672/Rev.1)

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17-26116 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Letter dated 8 August 2017 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2293 (2016) addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/672/Rev.1)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Security Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/672/Rev.1, which contains the text of a letter dated 8 August from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2293 (2016) addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

(*spoke in English*)

I have the honour to speak in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In my briefing this morning, it is my intention to touch upon three issues. First, I will highlight the final report (see S/2017/672/Rev.1) of the Group of Experts, the findings and recommendations of which the Committee considered during its informal consultations on 21 July. Secondly, I intend to provide an overview of the work of the Committee since I last briefed the Security Council on 11 October 2016 (see S/PV.7788), not only in terms of the activities conducted by the Committee in addressing the complex challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo today and over the long-term but also with a view to promoting synergy among United Nations actors and cooperation with the region towards the building of peace and stability in the country. Finally, I will report on the work that lies ahead, including a number of possible activities for the Committee in the coming few months.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to welcome him to this briefing, which comes at a moment when the Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing tremendous challenges. The final report of the Group of Experts of 10 August depicts a complex picture in connection with those challenges. The Group observed a changing dynamic of conflict and armed mobilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as reflected by the further fragmentation of armed groups operating in a more decentralized, albeit heavily networked, manner. Foreign and local armed groups are increasingly interconnected, which also has an impact on patterns of violence.

Concerning natural resources, the implementation of mineral traceability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has considerably reduced instances of armed groups directly and indirectly benefiting from the exploitation and trade of tin, tantalum and tungsten. However, the Group found that the ITRI Ltd Tin Supply Chain initiative traceability system has shortcomings in its implementation, thereby enabling different actors to intentionally or inadvertently facilitate smuggling. Moreover, the gold sector continues to suffer from the lack of a traceability system, as artisanally sourced gold from conflict-affected areas can still be exported to international markets through smuggling, involving illicit financial flows. Furthermore, legally issued certificates are being used in a fraudulent manner to export gold out of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and efforts must be made in that country, as well as the transit and recipient countries, to address the smuggling of gold in carry-on luggage aboard flights.

In the area of human rights and international humanitarian law, the Group observed that violations continue to be at significant levels in the the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Group focused on violations, such as cases of child rape in South Kivu province, the attack on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(MONUSCO) in North Kivu province, and the murder of two of its members on 12 March in Central Kasaï province. In that context, I would like to recall that, of the eight recommendations set out in the Group's final report, the Committee considered, during its informal consultations on 21 July, four recommendations that were addressed to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while the remaining four recommendations of the Group were addressed to the Security Council, including one recommendation related to the investigation into the murder of two members of the Group of Experts.

I would like to pause here for a moment and acknowledge the presence in the Chamber today of Mr. John Sharp and Mrs. Michele Sharp, the parents of Michael Sharp, as well as Ms. Maria Moresby and Ms. Elizabeth Moresby, the mother and sister of Zaida Catalán, the two deceased members of the Group of Experts. As I mentioned in a statement on 29 March (see SC/12768-PKO/629), I had the honour to know Michael and Zaida personally and to work closely with them in my capacity as the Chair of the Committee. Despite the numerous risks and challenges they faced, their profound courage, dedication to their work and utter devotion to the cause of peace were a source of inspiration for us all. The tragic loss of Michael and Zaida is a painful reminder of the volatile environments in which the members of the United Nations groups and panels of experts operate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere, which often come at great personal cost. That loss is also a reminder of the suffering inflicted upon a great number of innocent civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and that realizing lasting peace for those who have no voice remains our ultimate cause.

It is against that backdrop that the Committee and the Group of Experts have taken an active role in addressing both the short-term and long-term challenges facing the country. That has been marked by a deliberate effort to involve the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and those of the Great Lakes region to promote synergies among United Nations actors working on sanctions-related issues and to encourage collaborative efforts among regional and international partners, with the aim of forging a common approach to help achieve peace and stability.

In that context, following my trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region in August 2016, the Committee conducted a number of activities with the aim of maintaining dialogue with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the Permanent Mission in New York and Government officials in Kinshasa with regard to several aspects related to the Committee's work. For example, on 19 November 2016, the Committee received a briefing from Ms. Jeanine Mabunda, Presidential Adviser on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following which the Committee held informal consultations with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The Committee also maintained its commitment to conduct outreach with representatives of the region. On 30 January, I briefed the regional States in connection with the Group's mid-term report (see S/2016/1102). During that meeting, the Committee engaged with the invited States and listened to their views with regard to the mid-term report and the recommendations therein. In the same vein, on 20 March, the Committee held its ninth formal meeting, which aimed at enhancing its understanding of the security situation and the surrounding regional dynamics. The meeting featured briefings by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Head of MONUSCO, as well as statements by the representatives of the invited regional States, on the progress and challenges in their cooperation bilaterally or regionally, including in the context of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, particularly regarding support for the neutralization of armed groups, as well as disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation.

The security situation in the country, and particularly in the Kasaï region, received further close attention by the Committee when it received a detailed briefing by MONUSCO on 22 May, following which a representative of the United Nations Mine Action Service made a presentation on weapons and ammunition management in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With a view to promoting collaboration and coordination among United Nations and regional actors, the Committee held its first-ever open briefing on 4 August on the illicit exploitation of natural resources, with broad participation from the United Nations

membership at large. Speakers included the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region, the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Acting Coordinator of the Group of Experts, as well as the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other participants from the region.

As highlighted in numerous reports of the Group of Experts, the proceeds from the illegal exploitation of natural resources fuel criminal networks, armed groups and the ongoing insecurity in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such exploitation further limits the capacity of the State by facilitating corruption, weakening State institutions and hindering economic growth and social development. For example, although a major producer of gold and one of the largest diamond producers in the world, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the 47 least-developed countries according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Therefore, the fight against the illicit trafficking of natural resources is critical to enable the Democratic Republic of the Congo to move beyond conflict towards peacebuilding and development. The open-format briefing on 4 August was intended to take stock of the progress at the national and regional levels, as well as existing challenges and shortcomings, and to facilitate further improvements through a collaborative approach involving relevant regional and international partners.

Looking forward, the coming months will be a critical period for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that context, the Committee will remain vigilant and ensure that its work and that of the Group of Experts contribute to peace and stability in the country. Towards that goal, I intend to continue collaboration with the relevant United Nations interlocutors with a view to obtaining updated information on various aspects of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that are relevant to the Committee's mandate and promote further synergy in its work.

The Committee also remains committed to maintaining its dialogue with its interlocutors from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and those in the wider region in order to promote further collaboration with the Committee and the Group of Experts. In that context, the Committee will consider the possibility of a second mission to the region by the Chair in late October to visit the Democratic Republic of the Congo to speak with representatives of the Government and MONUSCO, as well as key partners in other regional capitals.

Among the major objectives of my delegation for that visit would be obtaining first-hand knowledge of the implementation of the measures pursuant to resolution 2360 (2017) and of the impact of the exploitation of natural resources on the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in line with Security Council emphasis as set out in paragraphs 19 to 26 of the resolution. The visit would also provide an opportunity to hold legal consultations with the Member State concerned in order to ensure the full implementation of the measures set forth in the resolution. The visit's findings would hopefully feed into the Council's review of the measures imposed by the solution 2360 (2017), as well as future engagement with the State concerned on the implementation of the measures.

Following my return to New York from the visit, I intend to convene a meeting of the Committee with regional States. During that meeting my aims will be to provide an overview of the relation of the Group's final report of 10 August, deliver a briefing on my October visit to the region and promote a general discussion on the effectiveness of the sanctions regime and ways by which to increase its contribution to peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President for organizing today's meeting and for his briefing as Chair on the activities of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) — the Democratic Republic of the Congo Sanctions Committee — in recent months.

Today's meeting cannot be a meeting like any other. The killings, last March, of Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp deeply struck and saddened us. The presence of the families of Zaida and Michael in the Chamber today reminds us again, if there were such a need, of the dreadful nature of these crimes. On behalf of France, I would like to address Mrs. Maria Moresby, Mrs. Elizabeth Moresby, Mr. John Sharp and Mrs. Michele Sharp to express once again our sincere

condolences for the loss of their children and sister and to express our admiration and gratitude for Michael's and Zaida's remarkable work. The entire United Nations family shares their sorrow. They can rest assured that France is at their side in this time of trial.

As France did in its national capacity, the Security Council, too, condemned these killings in the strongest terms. It has repeatedly called for an in-depth investigation to identify the perpetrators of the crimes and bring them to justice. In that regard, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for transmitting the findings of the Board of Inquiry that was established last April. The elements that the Board of Inquiry provided have caught our attention, including its finding that further research and investigation are required. In that regard, we renew our call for the Secretary-General to establish, as soon as possible and as he is able to do, a special investigative mechanism to enable the competent legal authorities to effectively prosecute these crimes and achieve justice. In Guinea in 2009 and South Sudan in 2016, for example, similar mechanisms proved particularly useful in shedding light on related dire events before the Council. We owe it to the memory of these two experts that justice be done. We owe it to their loved ones, to the many groups of experts set up by the Council and to all United Nations personnel and to the long-suffering Congolese people themselves.

Today's meeting is also of particular importance because the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a major source of concern. In that regard, I welcome the presence of the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Léonard She Okitundu. The final report of the Group of Experts (see S/2017/672/Rev.1), which is of a high quality despite these particularly tragic circumstances, underlines once again the gravity of the situation and the risks of its continuing deterioration.

The violence in the Kasaï region, which remains at an unsustainable level, is compounded by the spread of insecurity to Tanganyika, the increase in intercommunal conflicts in these areas and even the escape of prisoners in unusual proportions. Civilian populations continue to be the primary victims of this growing insecurity, as is illustrated by the flow of displaced persons and refugees. The Deputy Secretary-General highlighted this point last week: the humanitarian situation remains very difficult, especially for women (see S/PV.8022).

Reversing this unhappy dynamic necessarily calls for increased efforts to prevent impunity on the part of perpetrators of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, irrespective of their affiliation. It is up to the Congolese authorities to get involved, including by fully cooperating with the team of international experts set up by the Human Rights Council last June. The team, established by consensus and with the consent of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, must be able to enjoy unrestricted access to the places and persons concerned in order to identify those responsible for the violations committed.

As the deadline for holding elections approaches, the accumulation of delays in the implementation of the 31 December agreement generates questions and tensions that cannot contribute to the country's peace and stability. The agreement, which is the framework agreed by all the Congolese parties for the transition towards the holding of elections, remains the only credible road map for an end to the crisis in the country. As the Council recalled in its presidential statement of 26 July (S/PRST/2017/12), it is urgent that the agreement be implemented in good faith and in all its components. It is up to the Congolese authorities to take all necessary measures as soon as possible to ensure that credible and inclusive elections are held as agreed in the agreement no later than December 2017. It is particularly urgent for the electoral calendar to be released.

The tragic deaths of Zaida and Michael remind us of the responsibility we must collectively exercise to put an end to the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A large number of civilians have already lost their lives. Faced with this intolerable threat, we call on all Congolese political actors to be responsible and to act decisively in order to respect the commitments made last December. The stability of the country and its inhabitants depends upon it, as does that of the region as a whole.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I would like to start by thanking you, Mr. President, for the dedication you have shown as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) and in ensuring that Michael Sharp's and Zaida Catalán's important work continues. The Group of Experts has done, and will continue to do, excellent work, and I am honoured that we can demonstrate this commitment — voice this commitment — in the presence of Michael's and Zaida's families in the Chamber this morning. We are humbled by the presence

here today of Mr. and Mrs. Sharp and Mrs. Maria Moresby and Mrs. Elizabeth Moresby.

To Zaida's and Michael's families, I would like to say that the Security Council sits on the front lines of conflict resolution and that their children and their sister gave their lives working to find peace and resolve conflict. They pursued truth and justice, and we owe it to them to also pursue truth and justice and investigate their murders.

Michael and Zaida worked to shed light on the horrific crimes plaguing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We, in turn, must shine a light on their murders and pursue a full understanding of the events surrounding their deaths. The murder of United Nations officials cannot end with an administrative inquiry into their deaths. There needs to be a genuine investigation that uncovers the facts surrounding this case.

We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to pursue a follow-on mechanism to the Board of Inquiry under his own authority, and we urge him to waste no time in establishing the mechanism. There is no time for delay. We must urgently continue our efforts to uncover the truth surrounding Michael's and Zaida's deaths.

While Michael and Zaida are no longer with us, their work through the Group of Experts must continue. As highlighted by the Group of Experts, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo needs to do more to strengthen legitimate trade in natural resources and to reduce illicit trafficking in those resources. Illicit trafficking strengthens armed groups and corrupt officials, and therefore perpetuates conflict. Regional countries and organizations and all Member States must work together to reduce such illicit trafficking.

While the investigations of the Group of Experts have helped us to understand the nature and means of illicit trafficking and the funding of armed groups, their work needs to continue in parallel with the Democratic Republic of the Congo elections and a peaceful transition of power in order to bring real peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Without a democratic transition, we can expect continued cycles of widespread violence. The Congolese people are upset with their Government and are tired of waiting for the elections called for by their Constitution. We call upon the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to announce the timeline for the overdue elections and to stick to it. In the absence of an elections timeline, the United States will pursue stronger sanctions in the Council, and we will take measures to increase the pressure on and hold accountable those who undermine peace and stability or democratic institutions and processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or who are working on behalf of or supporting already listed individuals.

Finally, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is responsible for providing security for its citizens, who continue to suffer violent attacks and sexual and gender-based violence, who are fleeing their homes in the tens of thousands and who struggle to meet their basic needs as they are deprived of their livelihoods and resources. While many of the attacks are perpetrated by armed groups, we are concerned that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to support and profit from those armed groups and to commit human rights violations with impunity. Those actions and the continued delay in elections call into question the legitimacy of the current Government.

Our work is not yet done, just as the work of Michael and Zaida and the Group of Experts is not yet done. We must continue to find ways to seek peace and justice in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for Michael and Zaida, just as Michael and Zaida attempted to do.

Ms. Schoulgin-Nyoni (Sweden): I thank you, Mr. President, for your briefing as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is highly appreciated.

Let me start by acknowledging the presence of the families of Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp.On behalf of Sweden and me, personally, I extend our deepest condolences and heartfelt to them.

I would also like to acknowledge His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Once again, we strongly condemn the murders of Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp. It is intolerable that those tasked by the Council to investigate violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law are brutally killed. Zaida Catalán was the humanitarian expert of the Group of Experts. She was recognized for conducting her work with skill and integrity and for standing up for human rights and international humanitarian law. The same commitment and dedication led her to become a strong advocate for the human rights of the Congolese people. We

know that Michael Sharp was a deeply appreciated coordinator of the Group and that he brought with him equal dedication.

We recognize the particularly difficult circumstances under which the colleagues of Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp worked to finalize the report (see S/2017/672/Rev.1), and we commend them for their indispensable work. In honour of Zaida Catalán, Michael Sharp and of their colleagues, we would like the focus of today's meeting to be on their report and on how we can bring peace and justice to all those who suffer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sweden welcomes the report, which illustrates the fragile and worrying security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including its ethnic dimensions. In that context, information about ex-combatants being re-mobilized is worrisome. The reintegration of former combatants, notably child soldiers, must be significantly improved and attention given to the needs of both female and male combatants. As a partner and donor to the Congolese disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, Sweden supports the recommendation by the Group of Experts to revise the implementation of the DDR programme, with a particular focus on job creation and professional training.

Revenues from conflict minerals fuel the ongoing insecurity. Sweden is pleased that our hard work has resulted in a European Union regulation that requires importers of conflict minerals to control their supply chains. This is one example of relevant instruments in the fight against the international trade in conflict minerals. It is clear that more needs to be done.

Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not confined to the east; it touches both Kasaï and Tanganyika. The report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of 4 August recounts a terrible situation in the Kasaï region, with violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. That includes summary executions, extrajudicial killings, the recruitment of children into militias and horrifying testimonies of mutilations, sexual violence and rape. The scale of the violence has a direct negative impact on peace and security. There must be no impunity for those crimes.

The Kavumu case in South Kivu province, with 42 incidents of aggravated rape of children, is another example of barbaric crimes being committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sweden welcomes the arrest of a number of suspects for those crimes. Thorough investigation and prosecution is necessary in order to ensure justice for those victims. In that regard, we would welcome further collaboration among the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Sanctions Committee. That could entail sharing information more regularly, including through meetings, on groups and individuals that meet the criteria for listing.

Most important, though, the sanctions regime must be upheld and implemented by all parties, and the Group of Experts must have the adequate means to carry out its mandate. Sweden supports the Group's recommendation to extend the mandate to 18 months and to allow time for information-gathering under a more stringent security regime.

There can be no peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo without democratic progress. We continue to call for the full implementation of the New Year's Eve agreement, in good faith and by and with all Congolese stakeholders. Free, fair, credible and inclusive elections remain the only viable and peaceful way out of the current political crisis, which otherwise, as the conflict in Kasaï illustrates, fuels further conflict and instability.

To promote peaceful development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we would like to underline the importance of joint efforts by the African Union and the United Nations, such as the recent high-level visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo led by the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Mohammed. In the same vein, we welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. She Okitundu here today. We look forward to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's close cooperation with the United Nations and the Council going forward.

One of the recommendations of the Group of Experts is that the United Nations continue its investigations into the murders of the experts. We share that view. No stone should be left unturned in our efforts to deliver justice for those who lost their lives in the service of the United Nations. Now that the Board of Inquiry has delivered its report, we welcome the fact that the Secretary-General is looking into which follow-up mechanism would best serve our joint efforts to establish the truth and bring the perpetrators

to justice, as well as supporting the ongoing national investigations. We support the establishment of such a mechanism by the Secretary-General.

Separately, we must draw lessons from possible failures in the system, and we will carefully study the Board of Inquiry's conclusions and recommendations in this regard. It is the Council's duty to ensure the safety of the United Nations personnel mandated by it. What happened to Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp should never happen again.

Mr. Pavlichenko (Ukraine): I should like to thank Ambassador Aboulatta, Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his briefing and his leadership.

The Chair's statement and the final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/2017/672/Rev.1) depict the grim reality on the ground. Illicit trade in natural resources, arms smuggling, the fragmentation of illegal armed groups, human rights abuses, ethnic clashes and atrocities committed by foreign and local armed groups remain widespread in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, a drastic destabilization in the Kasaï provinces demonstrates that no part of the country is immune from such outrages.

At the same time, one cannot deny that the existing sanctions regime has played an important role in mitigating some threats. For instance, it reduced opportunities for armed groups to benefit from illegal involvement in the exploitation of natural resources, particularly for tin, tantalaum and tungsten. However, the gold sector lags behind and the lack of traceability systems leaves an opportunity for smugglers to profit from that gap.

Despite some positive trends, the overall situation does not show signs of significant improvement. We are therefore deeply concerned about further deterioration of the security environment in the country on the whole, which is evidently interconnected with the political stagnation.

The international community and the Council must spare no effort in assisting the Democratic Republic of the Congo to move towards the stability, peace and security that its people deserve. The holding of elections in 2017 remains an important element in that endeavour.

The same applies to accountability. The killings of two members of the Group of Experts must not remain unanswered. We want to express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims present here. Those who committed these crimes have to be brought to justice. In that regard, following the Secretary-General's recent letter on the executive summary of the Board of Inquiry report, we would like to call upon the Secretary-General to act in a swift manner and to establish a respective follow-up mechanism under his own authority, as his predecessor did in response to the Terrain Hotel tragedy in South Sudan.

Finally, in terms of the Committee's modus operandi, we do not understand the situation when recommendations addressed to the Council by the Group of Experts that this very Council has established are prevented from reaching it. We call on all Committee members to work constructively in full cooperation with the Chair and each other to ensure the effective functioning of the body.

Mr. Cardi (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for your very detailed briefing as Chair of the Committee. I would also like to align myself with my colleagues in addressing the families of Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán. On behalf of my Government, I would like to once again pledge our sympathy and solidarity as we join them in their grief. Italy hopes that those responsible for the deaths of the two members of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2293 (2016) will be swiftly brought to justice and tried.

In that connection, and in welcoming the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we appeal once again to the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to expeditiously and thoroughly investigate those murders and to cooperate with the investigations carried out by Sweden and the United States. As for the United Nations investigation, following the Secretary-General's letter to the Council, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General to ensure justice and we encourage him to implement an effective follow-up mechanism without delay, after consulting with the Congolese authorities.

Today's meeting seeks to analyse the results of the work of Michael Sharp, Zaida Catalán and their colleagues — precious work that will help us

understand the complexity of the Congolese reality. As you just pointed out in your briefing, Mr. President, the final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/2017/672/Rev.1) provides a detailed analysis of the persistence of negative forces, especially in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where armed groups foment instability, namely, by exploiting the country's natural resources.

Italy is therefore deeply concerned about that illicit exploitation. As the Security Council has repeatedly mentioned in its resolutions, putting an end to that illegal trafficking is critical to the peace and security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government in Kinshasa has taken several measures to better secure the supply chain of minerals and to implement a tracking system. We encourage the Government to redouble its efforts, especially with regard to the trafficking of gold, in which, according to the latest report of the Group of Experts, certain members of the Congolese army have been implicated. We therefore urge the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to prosecute them for those illegal activities in order to send a clear message against impunity.

As for imposing sanctions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are ready to work with the chairmanship of the Committee and to participate in dialogue with regional countries, which, in our view, play a key role in ensuring an effective regime.

Michael and Zaida lost their lives as they were investigating human rights in the greater Kasaï region. For months, the southern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been plunged into a cycle of violence and murder. Italy hopes that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will carry out a swift and transparent investigations to establish the facts and circumstances for the human rights violations and abuses committed in the Kasaïs over recent months. In that regard, while recalling that the Congolese authorities have the primary responsibility of protecting their population, we hope that they can cooperate with the international Group of Experts appointed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The perpetrators of those crimes must be prosecuted and convicted.

At the political level, Italy is concerned about the lack of progress in the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement, which remains the only credible road map for resolving the crisis and supporting the legitimacy of the transitional institutions. In that connection, we call on the Government and the political forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to rapidly implement the agreement and to ease tensions, in keeping with that agreement. In our view, those are essential steps to organizing democratic and transparent elections. We believe that we must urgently set the electoral timetable and accelerate the preparation of peaceful, credible and inclusive elections — to be held as soon as possible and in accordance with the Congolese Constitution and the agreement I have just referred to.

In conclusion, Italy continues to attach great importance to the rigorous implementation of the sanctions regime. We remain committed to working with the other Council members to renew the regime. The Group of Experts report that has been submitted for our consideration will also serve as a vehicle for honouring the memory of Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán.

Mr. Kawamura (Japan): I would first like to extend my thanks to Egypt in its capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004). Japan appreciates your leadership and proactive engagement, Sir, including with regional States and organizations.

We join our colleagues in welcoming the final report (see S/2017/672/Rev.1) of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo extended pursuant to Security Council resolution 2293 (2016), whose tireless efforts have been vital to the Committee's work. That informative report will play an important role in reviewing and shaping the Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions regime going forward.

We especially appreciate the dedication of the Group of Experts despite the extremely challenging environment following the loss of two of their colleagues, Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp. Zaida and Michael's professional and insightful work contributed significantly to the work of the Group of Experts. Japan would like to once again pay tribute to Zaida and Michael and to extend its deepest condolences to their families, some of whom are here today.

We continue to believe in the importance of a prompt and thorough investigation to bring the perpetrators of those killings to justice, as noted in the Council's recent presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/12). We call on the Secretary-General, in his official capacity, to establish a special follow-up investigation without

delay. We must avoid the recurrence of any such tragedy in the future. Ensuring the security of experts working for the sanctions committees is indispensable for sanctions regimes.

I would underscore that the Democratic Republic of the Congo today stands at a critical juncture, with profound and interlinked political and security concerns. We reiterate to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo the importance of holding peaceful and credible elections, leading to a democratic transfer of power by the end of this year, in line with the 31 December political agreement.

We are also deeply alarmed by the deterioration of the situation in Kasaï and the persistence of insecurity in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including grave human rights violations and intercommunal violence. The political leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must urgently address those concerns.

As Japan stated at the Security Council briefing on United Nations sanctions two weeks ago (see S/PV.8018), sanctions are not tools for punishment, but rather a means to support national efforts to maintain and consolidate peace and stability. Given the political challenges and worsening security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sanctions have a particularly important role to play in helping to deter, mitigate and end violence. The full and faithful implementation of the sanctions regime, including the recommendations made previously by the Group of Experts, is in the interests of all stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the international community, including States in the region. Today, 14 years after the establishment of a sanctions regime in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are still struggling with its lack of implementation. It is therefore essential to ensure that the Committee can revitalize the engagement of all stakeholders and continue working on concrete measures to improve compliance and efficiency. In that regard, we urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other relevant countries to continue and enhance their cooperation with the Committee and the Group of Experts.

As the deadline for holding elections by the end of this year approaches, the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is growing increasingly volatile, and may also have a major impact on the entire Great Lakes region. Japan is confident that the Security Council will continue to follow the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region closely. We will remain ready to act promptly if necessary.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We would like to thank the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) for his detailed briefing on the Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions regime. We greatly appreciate his leadership of the Committee and share his assessment of what is happening in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. We support his proposal for visiting the country and the region at the end of October. Similar visits have already shown the relevance of that practice.

We would like to express our sincere condolences and sympathy to the family members of Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán present here today. They gave their lives while fulfilling their mission in the name of a goal they sincerely believed in — that their work could bring peace to a conflict-torn African country. We believe that their killers and all who were involved in that barbarous incident will be found and punished as they deserve, while we, in memory of Michael and Zaida, should redouble our efforts in working for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Sanctions are an important element in the Security Council toolkit. However, such restrictions cannot and should not be an end in themselves. Their job is to help to achieve the political and diplomatic settlement of a conflict. We share the concerns about the worsening situation in the Kasaï provinces, where the escalating confrontation between the authorities and armed tribal groups is alarming. There can be no question that the Government and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should take additional steps to mitigate the situation. However, we would like to warn against any sweeping attempts to blame the Congolese military and police for everything that is happening through an alleged disproportionate use of force. It is the members of the opposition Kamuina Nsapu sect who are responsible for the attacks on Government officials, schools and polling stations and the recruitment of child soldiers. Of course, that should not be an excuse

for human rights violations by any of the parties, who should rather await the results of the authorities' official investigation.

In our view, it is crucial to ensure that all the Congolese parties consistently implement the comprehensive political agreement of 31 December 2016, if stability is to be maintained in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, we would like to note that the modalities of its implementation, as well as any possible corrections to the timing of the elections, are the exclusive prerogative of the Congolese people and should be addressed only through a dialogue between the authorities and the opposition without any outside interference.

We agree with the opinion of Egypt's Permanent Representative that the illegal exploitation of natural resources continues to be one of the main challenges facing not just the Democratic Republic of the Congo but the entire Great Lakes region. And while the financial fuelling of insurgents through this kind of activity is steadily declining, it is essential to ensure that the countries of the region can consolidate their efforts to come up with realistic ways of dealing with the problem. We see good potential in this area for the 1533 Committee's work.

We noted the timeliness of the 1533 Committee's open meeting on 4 August and commend Egypt's efforts in organizing it. At the meeting we looked at the statement by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that the United Nations Mission issued a fraudulent certificate of conformity for exporting Congolese gold, in contravention to the certification procedure for exporting precious metals out of the country. We hope that this issue will be comprehensively investigated.

We took note of the summary in the report circulated to the Council on 15 August (see S/2017/672/Rev.1) on the work of the United Nations Board of Inquiry into the death of the sanctions experts. We would like to draw attention to its first recommendation, which supports the idea of conducting a transparent and comprehensive criminal investigation under the jurisdiction of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with the support of Member States. We have been in favour of that format from the very beginning. Our optimism is buttressed by the attitude from Kinshasa, which is already cooperating with the United States investigation and is prepared to do the same with Sweden's representatives.

Lastly, we would like to comment on one of the Group of Experts' recommendations, about extending its mandate by a year and a half owing to the Congolese authorities' tightened security rules. We think this would be counterproductive and could send the wrong message to Kinshasa, as if we had no expectations of seeing rapid improvement in the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We should remember that the sanctions' job is to stimulate political dialogue and that decisions to extend or remove them must be made based on real progress.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Today we have been discussing the work of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo extended pursuant to resolution 2293 (2016). Tragically, their report (see S/2017/672/Rev.1) comes in the wake of the murder of two United Nations human rights experts, Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán.

I am glad that we are meeting in the open today. This is not an issue to discuss behind closed doors. We owe it to the families of Michael and Zaida, and their interpreter Betu Tshintela, to speak loudly and clearly in the Chamber, express our deepest condolences and reiterate our firm resolve to see their killers brought to justice. That is a message that needs to go far beyond the Chamber — indeed, far beyond the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — because it was we in the Council who asked for the information that Michael and Zaida went to gather. We asked them to be our eyes and ears. Wherever in the world the men and women of the United Nations are murdered, wherever in the world they are harmed and abducted, we cannot stay silent and we cannot stand aside. We must ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes face the fullest consequences of their actions. We need to ensure accountability.

We took the first step to that end through resolution 2360 (2017), with new designation criteria for those who kill United Nations personnel. The Secretary-General took the second step by commissioning a Board of Inquiry, which has uncovered more details. But more needs to be done. I therefore welcome the Secretary-General's call in his letter to the Council for a follow-on mechanism, and we urge him to take action swiftly towards a further investigation so that we can uncover the truth for Zaida and Michael and for the safety of

all United Nations personnel around the globe. Five months after the murder of Michael, Zaida and Betu, accountability is yet to materialize. Those who ordered their killings remain at large.

Zaida and Michael were two of the most pre-eminent experts on the Kasaï regions. Tragically, it appears that their very expertise made them a target. The violence they sought to eliminate was brutally turned against them. Let there be no mistake: they were killed for shining a light on the horrific human rights situation in the Kasaïs, and we must not let that light go out.

First and foremost, that means recognizing the link between the political and security situations. Uncertainty and inertia over the implementation of the 31 December agreement is only fuelling instability and violence. With the Vice-Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo here today, let us all agree that the December agreement must be fully implemented. If implementation continues to falter, we worry about what will happen next. We need only look to the first half of this year and the 430 officially recorded human rights violations linked to the electoral process. That figure is higher than that for the whole of 2015.

As the report of the Group of Experts (see S/2017/672/Rev.1) shows, such violence is fuelling further violence. I am appalled at the reports of child rape in Kavumu. I am glad that some of the militia responsible have been caught and put on trial; that is welcomed. But without political stability, the tide could turn and those positive trends could be reversed.

There are already clear warning signs, such as the growing reports of widespread sexual violence, including by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo in the Kasaïs, of the widespread recruitment of children by the Kamuina Nsapu militia or of continuing violence in the east. We should all be concerned that armed groups continue to fund their hateful crimes by stealing natural resources. Such crimes must stop and those responsible must be held to account.

We need to recognize that we have tools at our disposal to help that happen, such as the sanctions already imposed by the Council. They must be fully implemented if they are to be effective. We also have a responsibility to keep sanctions under close review. Those who engage in or support acts that undermine the peace, stability or security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo can and, if needed, will be sanctioned by the Council. The Human Rights Council international investigative mechanism will also play a crucial role in the Kasaïs. Let us therefore all urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo to cooperate fully with its work.

I would like to thank the Committee that you chair, Sir, for its work and for the report. I would also like to thank you personally for the sensitive and effective way in which you have steered our work.

Finally, we owe it to Zaida, Michael and the rest of the Group of Experts to continue to use their reporting in our decisions. As we have heard so clearly today, it is reporting for which the highest price has been paid and it must not be a price paid in vain.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank you, Sir, for your briefing in your capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We commend the fact that the 1533 Committee, under your leadership, has worked very efficiently and produced excellent results. China will continue to support you in your efforts.

China welcomes the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Okitundu, to the Security Council.

China was concerned over the murder of members of the Group of Experts and would like extend its deepest condolences to the families. The safety of United Nations personnel must be ensured. Any attack on United Nations personnel is unacceptable.

So far this year, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has worked to further the peace process and established the new transitional Government. It has worked actively to strengthen its capacity in the areas of governance and security. China welcomes those efforts. At the same time, however, the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to face various challenges in the political, security and humanitarian spheres, in particular in the eastern part of the country, where armed rebel groups are active. That is one of the main causes of instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region as a whole.

Ensuring the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an important foundation for furthering the political process and carrying out national reconstruction. It is a pressing task for the international

community to urge all parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular certain opposition parties, to put an immediate end to the violence, continue to be committed to the political process and support the political agreement reached. China commends the active role played by African regional and subregional organizations, such as the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as well as by neighbouring countries, to find a solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We encourage parties in the region to maximize their respective advantages in the quest for a peaceful solution. The Security Council must enhance its coordination efforts in order to send a united and clear message and to forge synergies in the international community.

In order to help resolve the issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the international community must fully respect the Government's leading role. Solutions designed by the international community will be effective only when they respect the Government's leadership and the choices of the country's people. To date, the Security Council has adopted various measures, which focus on the illicit activities of the armed groups and have garnered a number of results. At the same time, we must note that sanctions are not an end in themselves; they are a means to an end. They should serve to achieve peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

China appreciates the importance that the Committee attaches to cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and regional organizations. We welcome the Chair's plan to visit the country in October. We hope that the sanctions Committee will continue its consultations and maintain contact with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, as the situation evolves, will examine sanctions measures in a timely manner and play an active role in helping the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to achieve peace and stability in the country on their own.

The Chinese Government has always supported the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, to the extent possible, has provided assistance to the country. China is ready to work with the international community in continuing to play a constructive role for peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation thanks you, Sir, for convening this briefing and presenting us with a detailed report (S/2017/672/Rev.1) on the work of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which you are chairing effectively and objectively.

The Senegalese delegation would like to join previous speakers in expressing its appreciation to the Group of Experts for their outstanding work in drafting the report, which was submitted to us. That work is especially precious since it was carried out in particularly difficult and painful circumstances, clouded this past March by the murders of two members of the Group, Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán, whose families are honouring us with their presence at today's briefing. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate to these family members and to the members of the Group our heartfelt condolences, profound sympathy, solidarity and support during this trying time, which they are undergoing. Our same heartfelt feelings go out to the delegations of the United States and Sweden.

I would like to welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His presence is an additional illustration of the resolve of his country to pursue its constructive engagement with the international community, in particular with the security Council, to respond to the security, political, economic, humanitarian, and development challenges, which concern us all.

Today's meeting also makes it possible to highlight the work that the Group of Experts achieved in a particularly difficult environment, marked — as I have just said — not only by the deaths of two of their own, but by the heightened level of threats, particularly security threats.

The decrease in cases of violence linked to the electoral process throughout the country, mentioned in the report, in addition to the progress noted in voter registration are encouraging developments that, by their nature, are conducive to a positive dynamic leading towards peaceful, democratic and transparent elections. In that context, we call once again on the Congolese political stakeholders to resolutely step up their commitment towards a peaceful political transition by consensus that is respectful of the aspirations of the Congolese people within the framework of the rules and

laws of the country. I would nevertheless also like to take this opportunity to urge the international community to provide the Democratic Republic of the Congo the necessary and pledged resources — especially financial resources — with a view to implement the political process launched following the political agreement, which was signed on New Year's Eve 2016.

With regard to the final report of the Group of Experts under consideration, it need be noted that the situation with regard to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a matter of concern with the active presence of armed groups, which remain the primary source of insecurity and threats for civilians. Such resilience on the part of those groups, which moreover tend to multiply despite the combined efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, concerns us and reminds us that, in addition to military efforts, methodical and far-reaching work remains to be done so as to cut them off from their main sources of revenue and various outside sources of support.

In that regard, the investigation of the Group of Experts is particularly informative in noting possible contributions by the diaspora to armed groups covered by the sanctions regime through websites. We encourage the Group to continue in that direction so as to establish the scale and extent of those operations and, depending on the situation, make recommendations aimed at ending their financing. In that regard, we would underline that the cooperation of Member States is essential for the full implementation of sanctions, in particular in this specific case.

In that context, the Senegalese delegation would like to point out the resurgence of the ex-Mouvement du 23 mars, detected since mid-January, in order to stress the importance of strengthened regional and subregional cooperation so as to definitively eliminate the threat of that armed group's reconstitution. The same concern arises with regard to the remobilization of the Mai Mai groups involving former combatants who participated in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

As the Group of Experts has recommended, we must also stress the need to assess and recalibrate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, especially with regard to the reintegration component. Indisputably, although the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is primarily responsible for that, the work cannot be properly carried out without the renewed contribution of partners, including MONUSCO — which implies financial, logistical and technical support.

The issue of natural resources play a prominent role in the final report of the Group of Experts and is a recurring theme. In particular, the illegal trade and exportation of natural resources continue to provide considerable income to armed groups and fuel the instability and insecurity in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while, at the same time, financing criminal networks inside and outside of the country. Accordingly, that important issue was the timely subject of a meeting of the Committee pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which you chair, Sir, held on 4 August at your initiative. It was a very informative meeting that allowed for discussion on specific aspects of the sanctions regime with key stakeholders and partners, namely, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the region.

At that meeting, through those exchanges, it became clear that cooperation on the international, regional and subregional levels can and must play a role in the various mechanisms to combat the illegal exploitation and commerce of natural resources, and that the capacity of the region and the Conference must be strengthened so as to implement effective and integrated control and traceability systems. As the report notes, the effectiveness of the traceability systems and the implementation of due diligence rules have halted the aims of armed groups that seek to profit from the exploitation of tin, tantalum and tungsten — the famous three Ts. Henceforth, although the system remains to be perfected in connection with dealing with cases of corruption and fraud, the same efforts and cooperation that were effective in dealing with the three Ts must also serve as a model for the gold-mining sector, which is considered the most lucrative source of income for armed groups and criminal networks.

As we know, trafficking in natural resources is not the only challenge facing us in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. For there is also the illicit trafficking of weapons in violation of the arms embargo, which is one of the main causes of insecurity. In that regard, the solution could also come from

strengthened cooperation on the international level and among countries of the region so as to dismantle the trafficking network and the supply chain of weapons and ammunition to negative forces. Strengthening the capacities of those countries in connection with the storage and management of their arsenals, as well as improving traceability systems, is an important part of the response to those challenges.

With regard to cases of violations of international humanitarian law, my delegation would like to reiterate, as stated in the report, that the unconscionable killing of the two experts mandated by the Security Council constitutes an attack on this body and against the United Nations itself. It is a serious violation of international humanitarian law. Senegal, in the light of its involvement in United Nations peacekeeping operations, can only express its deep concern at the threats to the United Nations personnel on the ground.

In this regard, my country supports the investigative and procedural efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in collaboration with the United Nations and other interested parties, in accordance with Congolese legislation, in order to shed full light on these two murders and to bring the perpetrators to justice. In the same vein, with respect to vulnerability, particularly of women and children, in the prevailing atmosphere of insecurity, especially in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Kasaï region, my delegation recalls the provisions of resolution 2360 (2017), adopted last June, which calls, inter alia, for

> "all those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and violations or abuses of human rights including those involving violence or abuses against children and acts of sexual and gender-based violence, to be swiftly apprehended, brought to justice and held accountable" (*resolution 2360 (2017), twenty-fifth preambular paragraph*).

In that regard, my delegation wishes to hail and encourage the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, who spoke to us a few days ago about her joint visit with the African Union, highlighting the timeliness of reconciling efforts the United Nations, on the one hand, and the Congolese authorities, on the other, in order to prevent and stop the recruitment and use of children as well as violence, including and sexual violence, perpetrated against them, while combating impunity of perpetrators of such acts (see S/PV.8022).

Mr. Sadykov (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, we would like to thank you for convening today's meeting to hear your insightful briefing on the final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/672/Rev.1).

We are honoured to have his Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among us and welcome him to our deliberations. We also recognize the presence of the parents of Michael Sharp — Mr. John Sharp and Mrs. Michele Sharp — as well as the mother and sister of Zaida Catalán, Mrs. Maria Moresby and Mrs. Elizabeth Moresby. I would ask them to accept our sincerest and most heartfelt condolences for their tragic and irreplaceable loss. Michael and Zaida made heroic sacrifices by giving their lives for peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We honour their memories by offering our highest commitment to the noble ideals they lived for.

We highly esteem the extensive work of the Committee pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) and commend its leadership and the Group of Experts on the ground as they address the challenges facing the country. Your trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sir, and continuous efforts to maintain a constructive dialogue with the local authorities and regional and international partners make an invaluable contribution to strengthening peace and stability in the region.

On the political front, we are concerned at the increasing popular dissatisfaction with the political process, deepened by the worsening socioeconomic situation and increasing insecurity in Kinshasa and other main urban centres. We encourage the Government and the signatories of the political agreement to make every effort to reach consensus for its implementation and to hold timely, credible and transparent presidential, national and provincial legislative elections. We therefore urge the National Electoral Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work closely with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to uphold internationally acceptable electoral regulations, engaging all interested sides.

While we see considerably reduced exploitation of and trade in the country's natural resources, we need to close all loopholes in the implementation of the sanctions regimes and overcome the impediments of

corruption and the weakening of State institutions that block our success. The fight against illicit trafficking in natural resources is critical to enabling the Democratic Republic of the Congo to move beyond conflict towards peacebuilding and development.

Concerned with increasing violations of human rights, especially conflict-related sexual violence against women and children, we call for strict monitoring, improved protection services and better law enforcement, with a view to fighting impunity. We therefore need a comprehensive assessment of effective implementation of measures imposed by resolution 2360 (2017), including future engagements with concerned States on the implementation of those measures and recommendations of the monitoring group.

We strongly condemn the activities of all armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and their violations, especially those involved in attacks on the civilian population, United Nations personnel and humanitarian actors. We therefore call for the comprehensive and voluntary disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement of Congolese and foreign militia for the long-term stability and economic development of the country.

Finally, Kazakhstan, like others, is committed to achieving peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We understand that there is no simple or quick formula for completing all the large-scale tasks of conflict prevention and stabilization. We therefore call for the effective implementation of Security Council resolutions and the political agreement of 31 December 2016.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your briefing in your capacity as Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, and thank him for his participation at today's meeting. Like my colleagues before me,

I wish to express my special gratitude for the presence in the Chamber of the mother and father of Michael Sharp and the mother and sister of Zaida Catalán, to whom I wish to reiterate and convey personally the condolences of the Government of Uruguay. The appalling event that ended the lives of the two members of the Group of Experts reminds us of the difficulties and tragedies faced by many victims of violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It also reminds us of the constant sacrifices made by all United Nations personnel on the ground, whether they are soldiers, police officers or civilians.

Acts of sacrifice and selflessness, such as those of Zaida and Michael, are worthy of our constant remembrance and our utmost gratitude and respect. Uruguay remains firmly committed to the development of all necessary investigations to identify those responsible for such cowardly acts and closely follows all new developments in the matter. On this point, we take note of the Executive Summary of the United Nations Board of Inquiry transmitted to the Council this week and we encourage Council members to continue to examine in detail the content of the report, in particular the recommendations contained therein.

Mr. President, I would like to acknowledge your outstanding work and the active role you have been playing as the Chair of the 1533 (2004) Committee. Of the various Committee activities that you have mentioned, I would like to highlight in particular its visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo last year, meetings with neighbouring countries and meetings held with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Uruguay encourages you to continue with this work for the rest of the year, and we support your plan to organize another visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the next few months.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the Group of Experts, which, in spite of recently having to deal with extraordinary and very painful circumstances, has once again managed to produce a substantive final report (S/2017/672/Rev.1) that is very helpful for the work of the Committee and the Council. We share the various assessments offered by the Group of Experts. We are concerned about the activity of armed groups, the violations of human rights and the lack of concrete progress in the political process.

In conclusion, Uruguay would like to once again reiterate how urgent it is to fully implement the political agreement of 31 December 2016, in its entirety, in good faith in order to organize peaceful elections that are credible, inclusive and timely, by December at the latest.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your comprehensive briefing and for the excellent work that you have been doing as Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also wish to thank you for your comprehensive briefing on its activities as well as those of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are pleased to welcome the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We also acknowledge the presence of the families of Miss Zaida Catalán and Mr. Michael Sharp, the two selfless members of the Group of Experts who were mercilessly killed while on United Nations duty. We take this opportunity to once again pay tribute to them for their courage and dedication in discharging their duties under extremely challenging circumstances that, unfortunately, cost them their lives. We express our deepest condolences to the families for their tragic loss and hope that everything possible will be done to bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime to justice. In this regard, we take note of the findings and recommendations of the Board of Inquiry, and we look forward to the discussion on the matter next week.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is indeed facing enormous challenges. Political tensions persist in relation to the implementation of the December 2016 agreement although there is still hope that it can pave the way for the holding of elections and the end of the transition period. As the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/672/Rev.1) indicates, the proliferation of violence in different parts of the country continues to erode State authority, weaken institutions and hamper the socioeconomic development of the country, which, in effect, prolongs the situation of conflict. However, we realize that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is very complex. The African Union and the countries of the region have an enormous responsibility to assist the country to regain peace and full stability. That can be done provided the other challenges are also addressed.

The negative activities of the armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been fuelled by the illegal exploitation of the mineral resources of the country, especially gold and diamonds, which suffer from a lack of traceability. In this connection, there is a need to vigorously monitor the incidence of fraudulent use of gold and diamond exports, as well as the illegal taxation of local populations. The open briefing held on 4 August on the illicit exploitation of national resources was indeed very relevant to the Committee. The work of the Group of Experts on this matter will continue to be extremely vital.

The human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as so many colleagues have mentioned, is no doubt also of serious concern. Various forms of violence are being committed against civilians, particularly women and children, in the Kivus, Kasaï and Tanganyika regions. The briefing received from the Presidential Adviser on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the informal consultations held by the Committee with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict were very important.

In general we appreciate the work that the Committee and the Group of Experts have been doing to try to address the many difficult and complex challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to promote peace and stability in the country. In this regard the continuous efforts being made to consult with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and countries of the region, including within the framework of the Peace and Security Council, as well as to forge greater synergy and cooperation with other regional and international partners is commendable.

We take note of the Chair's intention to visit the Democratic Republic of the Congo in October, and we hope the visit will provide an opportunity to understand the current dynamics and facilitate the implementation of the various measures outlined in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Let me conclude by assuring the Chair of the Committee of Ethiopia's continued support and cooperation to him in the effective discharge of his responsibilities.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Mr. President, my delegation wishes to acknowledge your work as Chair of the Committee pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo and thanks you for your briefing on the Committee's work.

My delegation would also like to welcome His Excellency, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Léonard She Okitundu.

Bolivia welcomes and highlights the work of the Group of Experts for their efforts to promote lasting peace and stability in this brotherly country, in accordance with the provisions of the Council. We recognize and extend our deepest sympathy to Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán, the experts who lost their lives in the fulfilment of their duties. We express our condolences to and solidarity with their families, who are present at this meeting.

We are concerned about the lack of results in the investigation, which should provide the information necessary to identify those responsible for that tragic crime, so that they may be tried and punished by the competent courts.

Bolivia takes into consideration that the challenges faced by both the Group of Experts and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have increased exponentially. Both face the violence of local armed groups that, according to the final report of the Group of Experts (S/2017/672/Rev.1), has started up again. Moreover, they face foreign armed groups that maintain alliances with local groups, encouraging the recruitment of new and ex-combatants, and putting at risk the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. Furthermore, the Group of Experts has identified that, although the mechanism to track minerals such as tin, tantalum and tungsten has prevented the benefits of mining from going to armed groups, there are still deficiencies in its implementation. We therefore encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue to work on the effective operation of this mechanism.

The report also points out that the gold sector does not have a tracking mechanism; as such there is no effective monitoring of the trade in this mineral, which facilitates contraband and generates illegal financial flows that are later legitimized. Bolivia reiterates the need to fight against tax havens that allow the integration of illicit gains into the world financial system.

The challenges of managing natural resources are reflected in the history and the current situation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such resources are among the factors that influence the prolongation and changing dynamics of the conflict, which are reflected in the fragmentation of armed groups that operate in an increasingly coordinated manner, with humanitarian consequences for populations that, in many cases, are forced to abandon their homes.

Bolivia expresses its concern over the systematic looting of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by armed groups, some members of the armed forces and multinational companies that exploit areas rich in diamonds and gold without oversight. Monitoring areas rich in natural resources and their sovereign administration is critical to promoting a cessation of hostilities and economic development.

When a country maintains effective control of its resources and there is political, it is possible to undertake a structural change leading to stabilization and the strengthening of the rule of law. The lack of control over natural resources, added to political instability, are challenges that should be resolved in the first instance by the Congolese people. In that respect, it is important to work to harmonize and coordinate the efforts of all actors in respect of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With respect to the effectiveness of the sanctions regime, Bolivia believes that the latter should not be an end in themselves. Sanctions should be used as the last resource following a failure to implement the provisional measures set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, and should be imposed only when there is a threat to international peace and security or an act of aggression. Bolivia also believes that the design and preparation of sanctions must be regulated by just and transparent procedures, allowing the clear establishment of the conditions required of the States or parties on which they are imposed. These measures should be subject to periodic evaluations that allow a balance to be struck between their effects and the adjustments necessary to modify them in connection with the evolution of the situation.

We stress that the only entity encharged with this task is the Security Council, which must do so with the aim of improving the desired results and to guarantee the maintenance of international peace and security. The tendency to implement and impose unilateral sanctions seriously jeopardises multilateralism and threatens the international order, undermining the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

We believe that the commendable initiatives undertaken by the African Union Peace and Security Council, in the framework of the strategic concept for the joint operations of the Group of Five for the Sahel, could be replicated in Central Africa. The Group addresses terrorism and transnational organized crime by operating in border areas, based on a strategy and an institutional framework supported by the international community. We believe that this is a viable option worthy of consideration.

With respect to the political agreement signed on 31 December 2016 between the Government and the opposition, Bolivia commends the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Maman Sambo Sidikou, to implement the agreement, including the meeting held with the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Bolivia encourages the efforts to build consensus in the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo and the Majorité présidentielle. We call on the parties to engage in inclusive dialogue focused on respect for the Congolese Constitution, taking into account the points of view of all and including the establishment of the follow-up mechanism and the implementation of confidence-building measures. The best tribute we can pay to Michael and Zaida is to continue to work for peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. She Okitundu (Democratic Republic of the Congo): (*spoke in French*): I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month of August 2017, and to welcome, through you, the friendly country of Egypt, with which the Democratic Republic of the Congo has enjoyed excellent relations for many years. I thank you for this opportunity to address the Council at this meeting, which is considering the final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2017/672/Rev.1).

I also take this opportunity to express to the Security Council the recognition of the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the support and assistance they receive from the United Nations and, more specifically, from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

Lastly, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to the Group of Experts, which continues to devote itself courageously and tirelessly to the cause of my country. The quality of its work, despite some shortcomings linked to human nature, deserves to be highly praised.

This is also the place to offer a solemn thought in memory of the two United Nations experts, Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán, who were murdered in the central Kasaï region. The Government of my country and the Congolese people as a whole strongly condemn this despicable act, and I want to reassure the United Nations that the perpetrators of this crime will be severely punished.

I cannot continue my statement without addressing myself to the parents of Michael and Zaida, who are in the Chamber. On behalf of the Government of my country, I would like to convey our deeply shared grief for the immense loss of the dear ones whom they have loved and whom nothing in the world can replace. Our Government and our people wish to express our compassion for the misfortune that has struck them and reiterate our deepest condolences. Michael and Zaida certainly worked in the service of the United Nations, but also indirectly in that of my country, to which they rendered valuable services by traveling across its territory to denounce all obstacles to peace. They did their work not only with passion, but also with love. They paid with their lives so that the troubled regions of my country might find peace. Our duty, in honouring their memories and giving meaning to their sacrifice, requires us to pool our efforts so that the peace they so fervently desired and sought becomes a reality for our people as a whole.

I take note of the essential nature of the final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and thank you, Sir, for the briefing you have just given. I should have liked to limit my remarks to the content of the report alone, but the Council's attention to the situation in my country requires me to speak on a number of questions that will surely be of interest to its members. In that context, I shall briefly review the political situation, the electoral process, the

security situation in general and particularly in the Kasaï region, as well as human rights issues.

The political situation, as members know, remains dominated by the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016. Indeed, under the aforementioned agreement, a Government of national unity led by the opposition is already at work. Internal disagreements within certain political parties of the opposition, inherent in any political process, in no way detract from the Government's legality resulting from its investiture by the National Parliament. Moreover, the recent seating of the members of the National Council for Oversight of the Agreement and the imminent adoption of the law on the organization and functioning of that body will enable the process under way to continue its progress towards the organization of elections. In this regard, it should be noted that operations to update the electoral register have developed to our satisfaction. Indeed, out of the expected 42 million voters, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) has already registered more than 39 million, that, 90 per cent of the total number.

In the provinces of Kasaï, which have suffered heavy human and material losses as a result of the crimes and violence perpetrated by the terrorist militia Kamuina Nsapu, the deployment of equipment, with the support of MONUSCO, and the training of electoral agents have already begin. Registration operations themselves will begin by the end of this month. As soon as the enrollment process is completed, the Government will request the urgent consideration of the revision of the electoral law and the review of the distribution of seats at the next parliamentary session.

My delegation wishes to reassure the Council that the elections will indeed take place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in accordance with the electoral calendar to be published by the CENI. It goes without saying that, in accordance with the agreement of 31 December 2016, the CENI, the National Council for Oversight of the Agreement and the Government will shortly evaluate the progress of the preparations to assess the exact period of the three scheduled elections: the presidential, national legislative and provincial legislative elections.

With regard to the security aspect, the report under review highlights the continued presence of some foreign and national armed groups in the eastern part of our country. To address this situation, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), with the support of MONUSCO, is pursuing military operations against these groups. With particular reference to Allied Democratic Forces, it should be noted that since the dismantling of their main bastions, their operational capacities have substantially decreased. A certain lull has thus been observed in what was their range of operation.

With regard to the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, my delegation considers it important to recall the case of the 340 combatants of that negative force who voluntarily surrendered to the FARDC three years ago. As Council members know, these fighters remain to this day in transit sites at Kanyabayonga in North Kivu, Walungu in South Kivu and Kisangani in Tshopo. The repeated appeals to the international community for their repatriation to their countries of origin or resettlement in a third country outside the countries of the Great Lakes region have so far received no favourable response. My Government calls once again on the international community, which has always insisted on the eradication of that negative force, to become involved in order to achieve a definitive solution.

It seems to me important to recall here also the situation of the combatants of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition, which MONUSCO has confined to Munigi in North Kivu and Dungu in Haut-Uélé. My country, which wishes to live in peace and maintain good relations with South Sudan, also calls on the United Nations to assume its responsibility to resolve this situation by repatriating these ex-combatants to their country or facilitating their settlement in another host country.

As regards former members of the Mouvement du 23 mars, it should be noted that they continue, in violation of the Addis Ababa Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the Nairobi Declaration, to freely engage in their political and military activities in the neighbouring countries to which they have fled. My Government has never ceased to denounce the bad faith of these ex-rebels. It condemns their military activism and calls once again to the attention of the Council the need to consider imposing sanctions on the leadership of that movement. My Government reaffirms its determination to continue to fulfil its commitments and calls on other parties concerned to do the same for

sake of the stability of my country and of the region as a whole.

In addition to all this, I must point out that the illegal exploitation and plundering of natural resources are also among the causes of the armed conflict and instability that persist in the east of my country. My Government has undertaken efforts to reverse this situation, in particular by clearing mining sites and setting up a national commission against mining fraud. It will be agreed that these efforts alone are not enough to end this situation. It is therefore important for the neighbouring countries and the international community to join in these efforts. My country is asking the United Nations to take appropriate steps to develop a sanctions mechanism for defaulting States, including suspension or embargoes on trade in minerals, similar to the measures taken under the Kimberley Process.

I cannot close this chapter without mentioning the case of the terrorist insurgents Kamuina Nsapu. This mystical-religious movement was born in August 2016 in the territory of Dibaya, in the province of Central Kasaï, following a conflict over customary power created by a certain Jean Prince Pandi, alias Kamuina Nsapu, who had declared himself to be atraditional chef. He died on 12 August 2016 in clashes between his militia and the security forces. His followers, who spread terror and death in the provinces of Central Kasaï, Kasaï, Kasaï Oriental and Lomami, used civilians, especially children and women, as human shields after drugging them. They gather in small groups to attack public buildings that symbolize the authority of the State, such as police stations, army facilities, administrative and CENI offices, as well as the infrastructure of the Catholic Church.

Today, the authority of the State is virtually restored throughout that part of the national territory. Particularly after the tour carried out by the Head of State to reassure the populations of all the affected provinces of Kasaï. The major remaining challenge is of a humanitarian nature, related to internally and externally displaced persons, whose management requires the urgent mobilization of all partners for substantial assistance.

In discussing the Kamuina Nsapu militia, I believe it would be appropriate to give a brief overview of the progress of investigations in the provinces affected by that phenomenon. Following a deterioration of the situation, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, in his address to both Houses of Parliament in Congress, expressed his resolve to restore State authority in that part of the country, stressing that the crimes committed by militiamen against peaceful citizens, law enforcement officials and the United Nations could not go unpunished and that their perpetrators, who are the subject of judicial investigations, should be punished in accordance with the law. In order to give effect to his word, he signed orders setting up an operational sector in Grand Kasaï and instructed the Minister of Justice to take prompt steps to ensure that competent prosecutors and prosecutors could initiate investigations where nothing had yet been done, so that justice could be restored to the victims. The Minister of Justice was also instructed to expedite the investigations under way som as to ensure that justice was rendered as soon as possible in the areas where the militia continued to operate under the Kamuina Nsapu label.

With regard to the allegations of serious human rights violations against the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo in the Kasaï area, a National Board of Inquiry, led by senior military magistrates, was created by the Government to shed light on this situation. It was in that context that the Auditor General announced the arrest of seven soldiers suspected of war crimes by murder; war crimes by mutilation; war crimes by cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment; and denial of an offense committed by individuals or military jurisdictions, committed in the Mwanza Lomba massacre in Bena Tshikasu. The incriminated persons were convicted in the first degree following public hearings.

As for the mass graves, the joint MONUSCO auditor-military investigations and audits are continuing.

Regarding the deaths of two United Nations experts, the events leading to their assassination took place in Bunkonde, a town 100 kilometres from Kananga, the capital of Central Kasaï province. Initiated by the Auditor General of the Congolese armed forces, the investigation into the murder of these two experts led to the identification of 16 suspects, 9 of whom are already in detention. Nineteen hearings have already taken place, while the next, devoted to a visit to the scene of the murder, is scheduled for August 21.

In these investigations, Congolese justice is already working with the United Nations. As part of this collaboration, MONUSCO provides logistical

assistance to the military prosecutor. In the same vein, three international experts of Senegalese, Canadian and Mauritanian nationality, were recently appointed by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with resolution 35/33 of 23 June 2017 of the Human Rights Council, in agreement with the Congolese Government. These will be assisted by 19 international experts and experts from the African Union.

It goes without saying that these experts must be deployed in strict compliance with the terms of reference established in the resolution of the Human Rights Council, namely, that the deployment must be in the framework of assistance provided to the investigations carried out the Congolese military justice system. In the same spirit of openness and transparency, we note the excellent technical cooperation between the judicial authorities of my country and the experts from the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, at the request of the American authorities.

As regards Sweden's request for cooperation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I should like to reassure the Council that, just as we have been ready to cooperate with the American authorities, the Congolese Government agrees to cooperate with Sweden in the investigations being conducted by the Congolese judiciary, despite the fact that we do not have a formal mutual legal assistance convention between our two countries. The Minister of Justice has informed the Swedish Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo on this point. The Prosecutor General of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will agree on the practical modalities for partnership \with his Swedish counterpart, through appropriate letters rogatory.

In this tragic situation, my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has suffered much loss of life. Law enforcement officers and officials of the CENI, administrative and customary authorities have been beheaded. Ruthless militia have killed women, men and children. All these innocent victims deserve justice. That is why the Government of my country will spare no effort to ensure that the perpetrators of all these crimes are arrested and punished.

Before concluding, allow me to express the position of my Government on two of the recommendations formulated by the experts, as contained in the report before us. I refer specifically to the recommendation on the establishment of an independent international investigation into the murder of the two experts and that requesting the extension of the Group's mandate to 30 December 2018.

My Government does not think it is a good idea to set up such an inquiry in that, in accordance with 35/33 of the Human Rights Council and for reasons of transparency, we are already cooperating with established United Nations mechanisms and with the inquiries being conducted by the appropriate authorities of the countries of origin of the two victims. As to the request for an extension of the terms of reference of the Group of Experts, my Government considers that this issue has already been resolved in resolution 2360 (2017) of 21 June, which extended the mandate of the Group until 1 August 2018.

I would like to conclude by expressing my gratitude to the Chairman of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the work he has done since he assumed his post. I would also like to thank the Group of Experts for its commitment and determination in the exercise of its mandate. To all members of the Council, I reiterate the gratitude of the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.